

which deeply Indents the western coast of
 Scotland, and
 separated Argyleshire from Invernessshire.
 Near his
 house \vere two or three small hamlets
 inhabited by his
 tribe. The whole population which he
 governed was not
 supposed to exceed two hundred souls. In the
 neighbour-
 hood of the little cluster of villages was some
 copsewood
 and some pasture land : but a little further
 up the defile
 no sign of population or of fruitfulness was to
 be seen. In
 the Gaelic tongue, Glencoe signifies the Glen of
 Weeping ;
 and in truth that pass Is the most dreary and
 melancholy
 of all the Scottish passes, the very Valley of the
 Shadow of
 Death. Mists and storms brood over It through
 the greater
 part of the finest summer ; and even on those
 rare days
 when the sun is bright, and when there is no
 cloud In the
 sky, the Impression made by the landscape is
 sad and awful.
 The path lies along a stream which Issues
 from the most
 sullen and gloomy of mountain pools. Huge
 precipices
 of naked stone frown on both sides. Even In
 July the
 streaks of snow may often be discerned in the
 rifts near the
 summits. All down the sides of the crags
 heaps of ruin
 mark the headlong paths of the torrents. Mile
 after mile
 the traveller looks in vain for the smoke of one
 hut, or for
 one human form wrapped in a plaid, and
 listens in vain for
 the bark of a shepherd's dog, or the bleat of a
 lamb. Mile
 after mile the only sound that indicates life is
 the faint cry
 of a bird of prey from some storm beaten
 pinnacle of rock.
 The progress of civilisation, which has turned
 so many
 wastes into fields yellow with harvests or gay

with apple
blossoms, has only made Glencoe more
desolate. All
the science and industry of a peaceful age
can extract
nothing valuable from that wilderness : but, in
an age of
violence and rapine, the wilderness itself was
valued on
account of the shelter which it afforded to the
plunderer
and his plunder. Nothing could be more
natural than
that the clan to which this rugged desert
belonged should
have been noted for predatory habits. For,
among the
Highlanders generally, to rob was thought at
least as
honourable an employment as to cultivate
the soil; and,